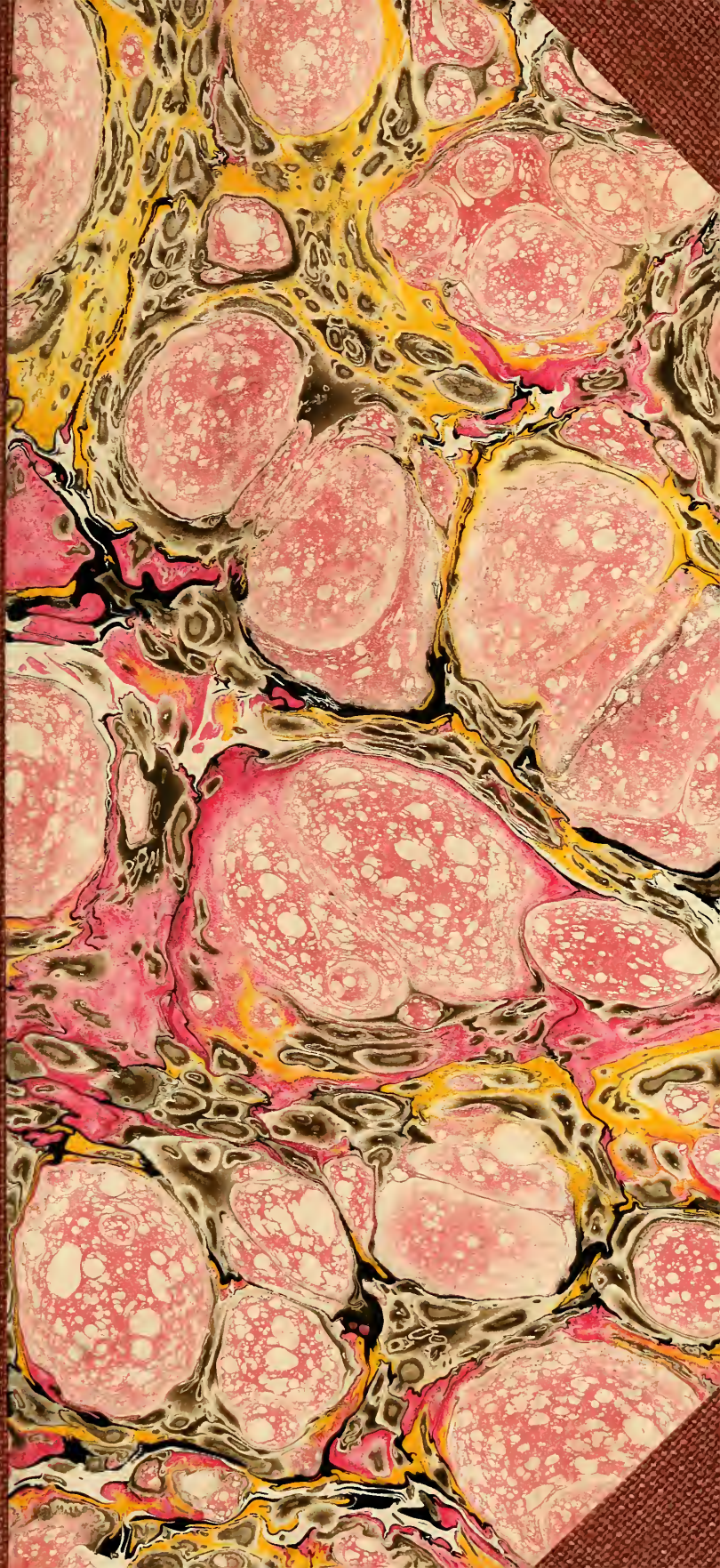






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CONFESSIONS

OF

A WATER-PATIENT:

IN A LETTER

TO

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

EDITOR OF

"The New Monthly Magazine."

BY

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON, BART.



LONDON:

H. BAILLIERE, 219, REGENT STREET.

MDCCCXLVII.

PREFACE.

I have observed, with a satisfaction very different from that which attends merely literary success, the gracious reception which has been given to this little treatise. Since it first appeared, an undeniable change has taken place, not only in public opinion, but in the minds of professional authorities, with respect to the safety of the water-cure, and its efficacious adaptability to many of the most obstinate of human infirmities. I am not so vain as to arrogate to this slight, unprofessional, and necessarily, therefore, limited and superficial, view of the water treatment and its effects, a greater share in conducing to the marked progress of hydropathy in popular and medical favour than is always due to the evidence of any honourable and educated man, without motive to deceive or exaggerate, who confines himself to what he has felt in his own person, and witnessed in those of others. I believe, on the contrary, that there have been circumstances in the time itself, which could not but expedite the progress of a mode of healing in conformity, not only with the principles of common sense and the laws of nature, but with those systems of medical science and professional treatment which have gradually but almost universally supplanted, in the theories and practice of our most acknowledged authorities, the old reliance on treacherous reliefs and temporary palliatives. The conscience and the wisdom of well-

educated professional men have now, for some years, been at work in sapping the ancient foundations of medical practice. The fatal absurdity of combating a chronic malady by strengthening its roots, as in habitual purgatives—or attempting to counteract a debility, occasioned or accompanied by morbid irritation, with fresh fuel for irritation, in the shape of stimulant drugs, has been everywhere yielding to more comprehensive views of pathology, and a survey at once wider and more profound of the entire mechanism of the human frame, and the laws upon which rests Man's natural condition—Health. Hence, both on the Continent and in England, the more eminent physicians have of late years occupied themselves less with attacking the diseased part of the frame by the partial application of drugs, than with enlightened attempts to restore the frame itself to health, by general rules of regimen and diet; unconsciously they have been acting in concert, throughout the civilized world, with the native and penetrating genius of Priessnitz himself, and in conformity with that bold and philosophical truth which he enounces in his favourite dictum—"I do not cure the disease, I cure the man."

Quite in accordance with this theory was the abstinence preached by Abernethy, (though not, indeed—the grand mistake—his dread specific of the blue pill,)—quite in accordance with it has been the simple treatment, especially of the old, (who more or less may be styled the chronic sufferers, by emphasis,) practised by Dr. Holland—quite in accordance with it the general hygeian and training system pursued by Dr. Jephson, of Leamington—quite in accordance with it the regimen ordained by the homœopathists, and enforced by all the physicians at the several mineral springs of France, Italy, and Germany. Instead

of resting, as heretofore, all principal hope on the drug that was to counteract an acid, or brace a nerve, or regulate a function, with a few general and mild exhortations to avoid cold, or be moderate in wine, prefer old sherry to champagne, and take a little gentle exercise in the middle of the day,—instead of bringing all science to bear upon a local infirmity growing out of an impaired general system, and leaving the general system to coax and coddle itself into vigour, the awakened genius of medical men has addressed itself, of late, to the improving the whole man, and so enabling Nature and himself to outgrow the local malady.

With this disposition among the ablest practitioners, have co-operated the feelings and experience of the public itself: this was evinced by the interest the public took in that most salutary legal enactment, which permitted the apothecary to charge for his time as well as his drugs; a revolution in itself as favourable to the enlightenment of the apothecary, as to the reprieved stomach and ganglionic nerves of the patient. It has been evinced by the general eagerness with which all new sects in the '*Religio Medici*,'—'Galvanism,' 'Magnetism,' 'Manual Therapeutics,' 'Homœopathy,' and the believers in 'Mineral Springs,'—have been greeted, provided only they omitted, or prodigiously curtailed the heretofore train and baggage of the physician—phials, pill-boxes, and mixtures every three hours. Meanwhile, as in his remote hamlet, the uneducated Priessnitz was curing his sick, and sending forth his disciples—men of the most indisputable science, of the subtlest and profoundest intellect, were not only seconding the main principles of his general treatment, but, unconscious or irrespective of his existence, explaining the

theories by which the efficacy of his peculiar application of cold and moisture might be solved.

In the writings of the great Liebig, which the universality of his knowledge, and the eminently practical bias of his intellect, have diffused as authorities throughout Europe, Priessnitz may be as much surprised to learn upon what abstruse yet infallible laws he has been renovating the powers of the human frame, as Shakspeare (could he return to the earth) might be to read in Goethe the principles upon which he created 'Hamlet.'

In all great changes that mark epochs in the intellectual history of the world, there seems ever thus a simultaneous movement towards the truth, which the epoch establishes and bequeaths—a wonderful co-operation on the part of thoughtful learning to inculcate—plastic ignorance to receive—and active genius to carry into effect the lesson from which the Future is to profit. Hydropathy is not only a novel principle of cure, or, if you will, like all truths, an old principle, re-produced and re-applied,* but, through all other principles of cure, its influence will be felt. Even those who oppose it will be found enriched by its discoveries, and unconsciously subjected to the mode of thought and action it has shaped out and fashioned. For a true reformer is not influential alone upon his own sect; he reforms, enlightens, and

* In the sixteenth century, that most extraordinary man—of whom it was said, "that he seemed to gain knowledge by intuition"—*Cardan*, boasted that he could cure all diseases by water alone. (*Card. Lib. de Aquâ.*) Cardan, too, held the doctrine, now more liberally admitted, that the simplest medicine had some concomitant evil. A judicious selection, carefully translated, of the works of Cardan, (which, alas! are in ten volumes folio!) would be an inestimable addition to letters.

teaches the very adversaries who condemn him as a heretic. If fagot and pyre are found no more in the papal territories, Luther has some share in the extinction; if three hundred years hence, human life is unshortened by drastics to dyspepsia, and irritants to irritation, due praise and honour be given to the Peasant of Silesia.

In England, the reception of all changes is proverbially slow, and therefore it seems sudden; for in proportion to the time in which the grain remains buried under ground, does the appearance of the blade above it seem abrupt and startling. But the public mind was long and gradually prepared for a system in therapeutics which should combine simple modes of cure for the complaint, *with a general repair and reintegration of the constitution*. Hydropathic establishments were founded in England—all that the public required was practical experience of their effects. The vision of Graafenberg was too remote for the majority of the afflicted. The sick man has seldom energy sufficient to contemplate a long journey to foreign lands—intercourse with strangers, consultations in an unfamiliar tongue. For the water-cure to become popular in England, the shy English patient, of all men, must find it in his own land, nor add exile to his other afflictions.

As these establishments have spread, as they have surmounted the first prejudices that assailed them, they have won their way, not empirically, by bought puffs and venal scribes, nor by that lucky accident which has often made awhile, leech and specific, the inconsiderate rage—viz., the cure of some potentate, or prince, or reigning beauty—nor by the dictum of some recondite and fashionable authority, but by the stoutened limbs and cheerful countenances of patients, chiefly, hitherto, drawn from the middle

ranks of life, and returning home to desk and counter, the amaze of the native doctor, and the example to his impatient patients. This is as important as it is undeniable. If the water-cure has made progress within the last few years—if it has become a subject of general interest and conversation—if it has forced its way into the favour of science, and the practice of the orthodox—if, where one bold and despairing man went, amidst the tears of his wife, and against the warning of his Galen, in forlorn hope, to the holy well, fifty now may be seen calm and cheerful, well versed in the theoretic philosophy of the wet sheet and sparkling draught, taking their places in the train, and scaling the Worcestershire Beacon, it is not because a royal duke has set the fashion, or a court physician has written a treatise thereon, but because the actual, positive, concurrent testimony of numbers has carried hope to the sick and conviction to the timid. It has rested simply and wholly upon evidence; and its missionaries, now happily found almost in every town, are those whose doubts it has removed—whose fears it has allayed—whose ailments it has redressed. These—men, women, and children—these are its true puffs—its recommendatory treatises—its walking advertisements!

Since I first wrote this letter, has appeared, not only the charming and *naïve* journal of Mr. Lane, which attests so well the pure enjoyments and high animal spirits which accompany the cure, and smile away all its hardships,—but the highly favourable testimony of the leading medical journal, edited by Dr. Forbes. Many of the most eminent of the faculty, with the true liberality which should belong to those embracing a profession whose object is human relief, now send patients to hydropathic esta-

blishments. I may cite, amongst others, the illustrious names of Locock, Forbes, Watson, Sir James Clarke, Lawrence, in sanction of hydropathic treatment in proper hands, as a system agreeable to science and approved by facts. And when we consider how very short a time the water-cure has been established in England, the great obstacles common to all innovation, and more peculiar to this—whether from the long-rooted habits of the population, the cry and clamour of the interested, the publicity given to every isolated case unsuccessfully treated, compared with the reverent silence, under which, in ordinary practice, thousands sink daily into the grave—I cannot but think the favour it has already won amongst those whose earlier doctrines it must oppose, and whose pecuniary profits it must somewhat invade, as conducing not more to the honour of the system than to the dignity of the profession, upon which, indeed, it must rely for permanent support and progressive improvement. For as it is not out of every wood that the Delphic knife could carve a Mercury, so it is not out of every man that you can shape a water-doctor. Not less from him than from the physician who applies himself to the secrets of drugs and simples, is required a profound knowledge of the human frame, of the diagnosis of disease, of the sympathy between the several components of our physical machine, and of all the different forms which, in our multifarious variety of temperaments, the Protean enemy assumes.

Most beneficial, and most to be welcomed, is this approaching union between the orthodox medical profession and the dispensers of the water-cure. It enables us to hope that hydropathy will not fall into the hands of rash and unlearned men, who might dip apoplectic Jones into the

plunge bath, or wrap Smith, with a pulse scarcely palpable, in the wet sheet, because Johnson recovered his nerves at Graafenberg by the one, or Jackson was cured of rheumatism or fever by the other. Most important is it, and to my mind, most certain will it be, that hydropathy will, ere long, form a constituent part of general medical education—that young physicians of ability and education will devote themselves to its peculiar practice—that while it will, more or less, in its leading principles, blend with other modes of scientific and enlightened treatment, it will obtain for itself a due proportion of the growing intelligence, and genius of the College. And thus the new generations may spring up under auspices singularly favourable to happiness and longevity in the circulation of doctrines conducive to innocent simplicity in our pleasures, and to temperate and hardy habits, not only as the means of health, but the sources of exquisite enjoyment. In the same spring to which we go for health, we shall find the true philosophy that is content with little but what Nature gives, and the true virtue, which in its instincts after happiness finds it centered in obedience to the common laws of our being,—in excitements which bring no satiety, in pleasures which leave no sting.

I ought not to conclude this preface without some remarks, intended as a reply to such as have insinuated that I have built my eulogia of the water-cure upon ‘the fancied cures’ of ‘imaginary ailments.’ On the contrary, aware not only of the tendency in others to ascribe to the enthusiasm of one whose imagination may have been over-cultivated, much of the wonders he names, but also of that tendency in ourselves to exaggerate the merit of what we gratefully approve, I have confined my obser-

vations entirely to the rigid circle of my own personal experience, and my own absolute eye-witness.

The following is one of the many cases I witnessed when at Doctor Wilson's establishment, showing how much may be done by a scientific application of the water treatment. It is that of a lady, who had had the lower limbs palsied for *nine* years, and who could, at the time I saw and conversed with her, walk well—and walk far. This case was the more striking, and I have selected it more particularly, because the cure was effected without the aid of those adjuncts of air or exercise, in which some sceptics are inclined to place the whole benefit which hydropathic treatment confers. For the patient had recovered the use of her limbs, and was enabled to walk without assistance, before she had once quitted the two rooms which, for nearly six months, formed the magic limit of the cure. And I confess that I scarce know which to envy most, the delight of this grateful patient at her restoration,* or the pleasure and honest pride of Doctor Wilson, in so signal a service to humanity, and so undeniable a trophy of his skill.

The lady had passed the meridian of life, and it was not until the power of standing had returned, that she had any faith in recovering the use of the limbs, notwithstanding Dr. Wilson's confident assurances, from the first, that she would walk again; her only hope was benefit to the general

* The simple old poet, Hesiod, wishing to convey the idea of extreme joyfulness, uses two illustrations, to which he evidently attaches equal importance—the delight of the lover hastening to his mistress, and the delight of a patient relieved from his pain. Which is the more vivid illustration of human pleasure? I would leave it to Romeo himself to decide—if I could only find a Romeo just set free from a sharp fit of the gout.

health; and this, with the Doctor's assiduity, induced her to persevere until his prediction was fully accomplished.

I have had frequent occasion to mention Dr. Wilson in this treatise, and in recommending him so strongly to the sufferers I address, I have not been influenced by any undue partiality. It was at his establishment that I had the principal opportunity of observing the invaluable results of the water-cure treatment. In every sense, a gentleman and an honest man, devoted to his patients, and with his heart in his calling, he has had during his long residence at Graafenberg, and in his own establishment, a peculiarly extensive experience of the hydropathic system, preceded by the best medical education, and twenty years' practical study of his profession; while he eminently possesses those precious qualities of quick discrimination of disease, caution, and comprehensive knowledge, which, in all branches of the profession, distinguish the really able and safe practitioner.

The time that has elapsed since this Letter was first made public has only confirmed, by further reflection and observation, my honest and firm belief in the efficacy of a system, which is rapidly making its most zealous converts amongst those who were once its most scornful adversaries, and scarcely a month passes without bringing me fresh intelligence from patients of the success that has attended the seekers after health who have followed the guidance of Doctor Wilson, to the sparkling sources of St. Anne; while perhaps the best testimony that I have not exaggerated the skill of my worthy friend may be found in the spacious buildings which the continued increase of his patients has compelled him to construct for their accommodation.

Nor can I omit this occasion to enforce the expediency of undergoing the cure in the house of the physician rather than in separate lodgings. I am persuaded that in the former case the cure is far more rapid. The regularity of hours and habits, with the minutiae of the treatment, are not only better observed, but are rendered more agreeable by the example of numbers; the spirits are sustained by intercourse with others united in the same pursuit, and by the encouraging view of the progress of those who are preceding us to the return to health. The mind is not left alone to brood over the ailments of the body. There is always some cheerful voice at hand to say—"I was worse than you." The commune with the physician is more frequent and easy—his superintendence necessarily more minute. A celebrated hydropathic physician in Germany said to a lady who asked him how long a time her case would require, and who wished to lodge out of the house—"Two months, if with me; but if you lodge out of doors, when God pleases."

Hitherto, it is true, that in England few establishments have been sufficiently commodious to afford accommodation to all the patients who resort to them. But the spirited enterprise which has founded the establishment at Ben Rhydding, and that which Dr. Wilson is now completing at Malvern, tend to supply all that can be desired; and comprise not only the comforts, but the luxuries compatible with the treatment, and while away the tedium of convalescence by such healthful amusements as water-cure patients (ordinarily the most cheerful of all invalids) are permitted and inclined to indulge.

To you, Reader, suffering and yet dubious, I can but repeat yet more earnestly the twin injunctions, which I have

urged in this Letter—*faith and perseverance*—and upon this last I insist with the greater weight, because I wish it clearly understood that I promise no cure to obstinate and long-standing maladies from a short experiment. Since this Letter was written, I have conversed, chiefly abroad, with several patients from Graafenberg, and their testimony has confirmed my own impression as to the exaggeration in the accounts of the *rapid* cures made by Priessnitz. No system human art has yet applied to human nature has achieved the wonder of regenerating the decayed constitution with the wand of Harlequin. I will add even, that where the frame has been long afflicted, it is not enough to *get well*, you would do well to wait till you have acquired the *habit* of being well. Thus, unconsciously, you arrive at that state in which you feel not only the negative relief of freedom from your afflictions, but the positive enjoyment of what Erasmus calls “*basilicâ, athleticâ, pancraticâ valetudine*,”—a right royal, athletic, pancratical state of health!

“If I was you,” quoth Yorick, “I would drink more water, Eugenius.” So shall you be able, in good truth, to hold that imaginary conversation recorded in Tristram Shandy:

“And in perfect good health?”

“The most perfect, Madam, that friendship herself could wish me.”

“And drink nothing—nothing but water!”

“Clitorio quicunque sitem de fonte levârit
Vina fugit, gaudetque meris abstemius undis.”*

* Ov. Met. xv., which Dryden has thus translated:—

“Clitorian streams the love of wine expel,
Such is the virtue of the abstemious well.”

CONFESSIONS
OF
A WATER-PATIENT,
In a Letter

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE."

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

I am truly glad to see so worthily filled the presidency in one of the many chairs which our republic permits to criticism and letters—a dignity in which I had the honour to precede you, *sub consule Planco*, in the good days of William IV. I feel as if there were something ghost-like in my momentary return to my ancient haunts, no longer in the editorial robe and purple, but addressing a new chief, and in great part, a new assembly: For the reading public is a creature of rapid growth—every five years a fresh generation pours forth from our institutes, our colleges, our schools, demanding, and filled with, fresh ideas, fresh principles and hopes: And the seas wash the place where Canute parleyed with the waves.

All that interested the world, when to me (then Mr.

Editor, now Mr. Editor's humble servant) contributors addressed their articles—hot and seasoned for the month, and like all good articles to a periodical, “warranted *not* to keep,” have passed away into the lumber-room, where those old maids, History and Criticism, hoard their scraps and relics, and where, amidst dust and silence, things old-fashioned ripen into things antique.

The roar of the Reform Bill is still, Fanny Kemble is Mrs. Butler, the “Hunchback” awaits upon our shelves the resuscitation of a new *Julia*; poets of promise have become mute, Rubini sings no more, Macready is in the provinces; “Punch” frisks it on the jocund throne of Sydney Smith, and over a domain once parcelled amongst many, reigns “Boz.” Scattered and voiceless the old contributors—a new hum betrays the changing Babel of a new multitude.

Gliding thus, I say, ghost-like, amidst the present race, busy and sanguine as the past, I feel that it best suits with a ghost's dignity, to appear but for an admonitory purpose; not with the light and careless step of an ordinary visitor, but with meaning stride, and finger upon lip. Ghosts, we know, have appeared to predict death—more gentle I, my apparition would only promise healing, and beckon not to graves and charnels, but to the Hygeian spring.

And now that I am fairly on the ground, let us call to mind, Mr. Editor, the illustrious names which still overshadow it at once with melancholy and fame. Your post has been filled by men, whose fate preludes the envy which their genius might excite. By Campbell, the high-souled and silver-tongued, and by Hook, from whom

jest, and whim, and humour, flowed in so free and riotous a wave, that books confined and narrowed away the stream ; to read Hook is to wrong him.

Nor can we think of your predecessors without remembering your rival, Hood, who, as the tree puts forth the most exuberant blossoms the year before its decay, showed the bloom and promise of his genius most when the worm was at the trunk. To us behind the scenes, to us who knew the men, how melancholy the contrast between the fresh and youthful intellect, the worn-out and broken frame; for, despite what I have seen written, Campbell when taken at the right moment, was Campbell ever. Not capable, indeed, towards the last, of the same exertion, if manifested by those poor evidences of what is in us, that books parade, but still as powerful in his great and noble thoughts, in the oral poetry revealed by flashes and winged words, though unrounded into form.

And Hook jested on the bed of death, as none but he could jest. And Hood! who remembers not the tender pathos, the exquisite humanity, which spoke forth from his darkened room? Alas! what prolonged pangs, what heavy lassitude, what death in life did these men endure!

Here we are, Mr. Editor, in these days of cant and jargon, preaching up the education of the mind, forcing our children under melon-frames, and babbling to the labourer and mechanic, "Read, and read, and read," as if God had not given us muscles, and nerves, and bodies, subjected to exquisite pains as pleasures—as if the body were not to be cared for and cultivated as well as the mind; as if health were no blessing instead of that capital good, without which all other blessings—save the

hope of health eternal—grow flat and joyless; as if the enjoyment of the world in which we are, was not far more closely linked with our physical than our mental selves; as if we were better than maimed and imperfect men, so long as our nerves are jaded and prostrate, our senses dim and heavy, our relationship with Nature abridged and thwarted by the jaundiced eye, and failing limb, and trembling hand—the apothecary's shop between us and the sun!

For the mind, we admit, that to render it strong and clear, habit and discipline are required;—how deal we (especially we, Mr. Editor, of the London world—we of the literary craft—we of the restless, striving brotherhood)—how deal we with the body? We carry it on with us, as a post-horse, from stage to stage—does it flag? no rest! give it ale or the spur. We begin to feel the frame break under us;—we administer a drug, gain a temporary relief, shift the disorder from one part to another—forget our ailments in our excitements, and when we pause at last, thoroughly shattered, with complaints grown chronic, diseases fastening to the organs, send for the doctors in good earnest, and die as your predecessors and your rival died, under combinations of long-neglected maladies, which could never have been known had we done for the body what we do for the mind—made it strong by discipline, and maintained it firm by habit.

Not alone calling to recollection our departed friends, but looking over the vast field of suffering which those acquainted with the lives of men who think and labour cannot fail to behold around them, I confess, though I have something of Canning's disdain of professed philan-

thropists, and do not love every knife-grinder as much as if he were my brother—I confess, nevertheless, that I am filled with an earnest pity; and an anxious desire seizes me to communicate to others that simple process of healing and well-being which has passed under my own experience, and to which I gratefully owe days no longer weary of the sun, and nights which no longer yearn for and yet dread the morrow.

And now, Mr. Editor, I may be pardoned, I trust, if I illustrate by my own case the system I commend to others.

I have been a workman in my day. I began to write and to toil, and to win some kind of a name, which I had the ambition to improve, while yet little more than a boy. With strong love for study of books—with yet greater desire to accomplish myself in the knowledge of men, for sixteen years I conceive no life to have been more filled by occupation than mine. What time was not given to action was given to study; what time not given to study, to action—labour in both! To a constitution naturally far from strong, I allowed no pause or respite. The wear and tear went on without intermission—the whirl of the wheel never ceased.

Sometimes, indeed, thoroughly overpowered and exhausted, I sought for escape. The physicians said, “Travel,” and I travelled. “Go into the country,” and I went. But in such attempts at repose all my ailments gathered round me—made themselves far more palpable and felt. I had no resource but to fly from myself—to fly into the other world of books, or thought or reverie—to live in some state of being less painful than my own.

As long as I was always at work it seemed that I had no leisure to be ill. Quiet was my hell.

At length, the frame thus long neglected—patched up for a while by drugs and doctors—put off and trifled with as an intrusive dun—like a dun who is in his rights—brought in its arrears—crushing and terrible, accumulated through long years : Worn out and wasted, the constitution seemed wholly inadequate to meet the demand.

The exhaustion of toil and study had been completed by great anxiety and grief. I had watched with alternate hope and fear the lingering and mournful death-bed of my nearest relation and dearest friend—of the person around whom was entwined the strongest affection my life had known—and when all was over, I seemed scarcely to live myself.

At this time, about the January of 1844, I was thoroughly shattered. The least attempt at exercise exhausted me. The nerves gave way at the most ordinary excitement—a chronic irritation of that vast surface we call the mucous membrane, which had defied for years all medical skill, rendered me continually liable to acute attacks, which from their repetition, and the increased feebleness of my frame, might at any time be fatal. Though free from any organic disease of the heart, its action was morbidly restless and painful. My sleep was without refreshment. At morning I rose more weary than I laid down to rest.

Without fatiguing you and your readers further with the *longa cohors* of my complaints, I pass on to record my struggle to resist them. I have always had a great belief in the power of WILL. What a man determines to do—

that in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred I hold that he succeeds in doing. I determined to have some insight into a knowledge I had never attained since manhood—the knowledge of health.

I resolutely put away books and study, sought the airs which the physicians esteemed most healthful, and adopted the strict regimen on which all the children of Esculapius so wisely insist. In short, I maintained the same general habits as to hours, diet (with the exception of wine, which in moderate quantities seemed to me indispensable), and, so far as my strength would allow, of exercise, as I found afterwards instituted at hydropathic establishments.

I dwell on this to forestall in some degree the common remark of persons not well acquainted with the medical agencies of water—that it is to the regular life which water-patients lead, and not to the element itself that they owe their recovery. Nevertheless I found that these changes, however salutary in theory, produced little, if any, practical amelioration in my health.

All invalids know, perhaps, how difficult, under ordinary circumstances, is the alteration of habits from bad to good. The early rising, the walk before breakfast, so delicious in the feelings of freshness and vigour which they bestow upon the strong, often become punishments to the valetudinarian. Headache, languor, a sense of weariness over the eyes, a sinking of the whole system towards noon, which seemed imperiously to demand the dangerous aid of stimulants, were all that I obtained by the morning breeze and the languid stroll by the seashore.

The suspension from study only afflicted me with intolerable *ennui*, and added to the profound dejection of the spirits. The brain, so long accustomed to morbid activity, was but withdrawn from its usual occupations to invent horrors and chimeras. Over the pillow, vainly sought two hours before midnight, hovered no golden sleep. The absence of excitement, however unhealthy, only aggravated the symptoms of ill-health.

It was at this time that I met by chance, in the library at St. Leonard's, with Captain Claridge's work on the "Water Cure," as practised by Priessnitz at Graafenberg. Making allowance for certain exaggerations therein, which appeared evident to my common sense, enough still remained not only to captivate the imagination and flatter the hopes of an invalid, but to appeal with favour to his sober judgment.

Till then, perfectly ignorant of the subject and the system, except by some such vague stories and good jests as had reached my ears in Germany, I resolved at least to read what more could be said in favour of the *ariston udor*, and examine dispassionately into its merits as a medication.

I was then under the advice of one of the first physicians of our age. I had consulted half the faculty. I had every reason to be grateful for the attention, and to be confident in the skill of those whose prescriptions had, from time to time, flattered my hopes and enriched the chemist. But the truth must be spoken—far from being better, I was sinking fast. Little remained for me to try in the great volume of the herbal. Seek what I would next, even if a quackery, it certainly might expedite my grave,

but it could scarcely render life—at least the external life—more unjoyous.

Accordingly I examined, with such grave thought as a sick man brings to bear upon his case, all the grounds upon which to justify to myself an excursion to the snows of Silesia. But I own that in proportion as I found my faith in the system strengthen, I shrank from the terrors of this long journey to the rugged region in which the probable lodging would be a labourer's cottage,* and in which the Babel of a hundred languages (so agreeable to the healthful delight in novelty—so appalling to the sickly despondency of a hypochondriac) would murmur and growl over a public table spread with no tempting condiments.

Could I hope to find healing in my own land, and not too far from my own doctors in case of failure, I might indeed solicit the watery gods—but the journey. I who scarcely lived through a day without leech or potion!—the long—gelid journey to Graafenberg—I should be sure to fall ill by the way—to be clutched and mismanaged by some German doctor—to deposit my bones in some dismal churchyard on the banks of the Father Rhine.

While thus perplexed, I fell in with one of the pamphlets written by Doctor Wilson, of Malvern, and my doubts were solved. Here was an English doctor

* Let me not disparage the fountain head of the water-cure, the parent institution of the great Priessnitz. I believe many of the earlier hardships complained of at Graafenberg have been removed or amended; and such as remain, are no doubt well compensated by the vast experience and extraordinary tact of a man who will rank hereafter amongst the most illustrious discoverers who have ever benefited the human race.

who had himself known more than my own sufferings, who, like myself, had found the pharmacopeia in vain—who had spent ten months at Graafenberg, and left all his complaints behind him—who, fraught with the experience he had acquired, not only in his own person, but from scientific examination of the cases under his eye, had transported the system to our native shores, and who proffered the proverbial salubrity of Malvern air and its holy springs, to those who, like me, had ranged in vain from simple to mineral, and who had become bold by despair—bold enough to try if health, like truth, lay at the bottom of a well.

I was not then aware that other institutions had been established in England of more or less fame. I saw in Doctor Wilson the first transporter—at least as a physician—of the Silesian system, and did not care to look out for other and later pupils of this innovating German school.

I resolved, then, to betake myself to Malvern. On my way through town, I paused, in the innocence of my heart, to inquire of some of the faculty if they thought the water-cure would suit my case. With one exception, they were unanimous in the vehemence of their denunciation.

Granting even that in some cases, especially of rheumatism, hydropathy had produced a cure, to my complaints it was worse than inapplicable—it was highly dangerous—it would probably be fatal. I had not stamina for the treatment—it would fix chronic ailments into organic disease—surely, it would be much better to try what I had not yet tried.

What had I not yet tried? A course of prussic acid! Nothing was better for gastrite irritation, which was no doubt the main cause of my suffering! If, however, I were obstinately bent upon so mad an experiment, Doctor Wilson was the last person I should go to. I was not deterred by all these intimidations, nor seduced by the salubrious allurements of the prussic acid under its scientific appellation of hydrocyanic.

A little reflection taught me that the members of a learned profession are naturally the very persons least disposed to favour innovation upon the practices which custom and prescription have rendered sacred in their eyes. A lawyer is not the person to consult upon bold reforms in jurisprudence. A physician can scarcely be expected to own that a Silesian peasant will cure with water the diseases which resist an armament of phials. And with regard to the peculiar objections to Doctor Wilson, I had read in his own pamphlet attacks upon the orthodox practice sufficient to account for—perhaps to justify—the disposition to depreciate him in return.

Still my friends were anxious and fearful; to please them I continued to inquire, though not of physicians, but of patients. I sought out some of those who had gone through the process. I sifted some of the cases of cure cited by Doctor Wilson. I found the account of the patients so encouraging, the cases quoted so authentic, that I grew impatient of delay. I threw physic to the dogs, and went to Malvern.

It is not my intention, Mr. Editor, to detail the course I underwent. The different resources of water as a medicament, are to be found in many works easily to be

obtained, and well worth the study. In this letter I suppose myself to be addressing those as thoroughly unacquainted with the system as I was myself at the first, and I deal, therefore, only in generals.

The first point which impressed and struck me was the extreme and utter innocence of the water-cure in skilful hands—in any hands, indeed, not thoroughly new to the system. Certainly when I went, I believed it to be a kill or cure system. I fancied it must be a very violent remedy—that it doubtless might effect great and magical cures—but that if it failed, it might be fatal.

Now, I speak not alone of my own case, but of the immense number of cases I have seen—patients of all ages—all species and genera of disease—all kinds and conditions of constitution, when I declare, upon my honour, that I never witnessed one dangerous symptom produced by the water-cure, whether at Doctor Wilson's or the other Hydropathic Institutions which I afterwards visited.

And though unquestionably fatal consequences might occur from gross mismanagement, and as unquestionably have so occurred at various establishments, I am yet convinced that water in itself is so friendly to the human body, that it requires a very extraordinary degree of bungling, of ignorance, and presumption, to produce results really dangerous; that a regular practitioner does more frequent mischief from the misapplication of even the simplest drugs, than a water-doctor of very moderate experience does, or can do, by the misapplication of his baths and friction.

And here I must observe, that those portions of the

treatment which appear to the uninitiated as the most perilous are really the safest,* and can be applied with the most impunity to the weakest constitutions; whereas those which appear, from our greater familiarity with them, the least startling and most innocuous,† are those which require the greatest knowledge of general pathology and the individual constitution. I shall revert to this part of my subject before I conclude.

The next thing that struck me was the extraordinary ease with which, under this system, good habits are acquired, and bad habits relinquished. The difficulty with which, under orthodox medical treatment, stimulants are abandoned, is here not witnessed.

Patients accustomed for half a century to live hard and high, wine-drinkers, spirit-bibbers, whom the regular physician has sought in vain to reduce to a daily pint of sherry, here voluntarily resign all strong potations, after a day or two cease to feel the want of them, and reconcile themselves to water, as if they had drunk nothing else all their lives. Others, who have had recourse for years and years to medicine,—their potion in the morning, their cordial at noon, their pill before dinner, their narcotic at bedtime, cease to require these aids to life, as if by a charm.

Nor this alone. Men to whom mental labour has been a necessary—who have existed on the excitement of the passions and the stir of the intellect—who have felt, these withdrawn, the prostration of the whole system—the lock to the wheel of the entire machine—return at once to the careless spirits of the boy in his first holiday.

* Such as the wet-sheet packing.

† The plunge-bath—the Douche.

Here lies a great secret; water thus skilfully administered is in itself a wonderful excitement, it supplies the place of all others—it operates powerfully and rapidly upon the nerves, sometimes to calm them, sometimes to irritate, but always to occupy.

Hence follows a consequence which all patients have remarked—the complete repose of the passions during the early stages of the cure; they seem laid asleep as if by enchantment. The intellect shares the same rest; after a short time, mental exertion becomes impossible; even the memory grows far less tenacious of its painful impressions, cares and griefs are forgotten; the sense of the present absorbs the past and future; there is a certain freshness of youth which pervades the spirits, and lives upon the enjoyment of the actual hour.

Thus the great agents of our mortal wear and tear—the passions and the mind—calmed into strange rest,—Nature seems to leave the body to its instinctive tendency, which is always towards recovery. All that interests and amuses is of a healthful character; exercise, instead of being an unwilling drudgery, becomes the inevitable impulse of the frame braced and invigorated by the element. A series of reactions is continually going on—the willing exercise produces refreshing rest, the refreshing rest willing exercise.

The extraordinary effect which water taken early in the morning produces on the appetite is well known amongst those who have tried it, even before the water-cure was thought of; an appetite it should be the care of the skilful doctor to check into moderate gratification; the powers of nutrition become singularly strengthened,

the blood grows rich and pure—the constitution is not only amended—it undergoes a change.*

The safety of the system, then, struck me first;—its power of replacing by healthful stimulants the morbid ones it withdrew, whether physical or moral, surprised me next;—that which thirdly impressed me was no less contrary to all my preconceived notions. I had fancied, that whether good or bad, the treatment must be one of great hardship, extremely repugnant and disagreeable. I wondered at myself to find how soon it became so associated with pleasurable and grateful feelings as to dwell upon the mind amongst the happiest passages of existence. For my own part, despite all my ailments, or whatever may have been my cares, I have ever found exquisite pleasure in that sense of *being* which is, as it were, the conscience, the mirror, of the soul. I have known hours of as much and as vivid happiness as perhaps can fall to the lot of man; but amongst all my most brilliant recollections, I can recall no periods of enjoyment at once more hilarious and serene than the hours spent on the lonely hills of Malvern—none in which nature was so thoroughly possessed and appreciated.

* Doctor Wilson observed to me once, very truly I think, that many regular physicians are beginning to own the effect of water as a stimulant who yet do not perceive its far more complicated and beneficial effects as an alterative. I may here remark, that eminent physicians are already borrowing largely from the details of the water-cure—recommending water to be drunk fasting—the use of the sitz, or hip bath, &c. But these, however useful as aids in the treatment of maladies, cannot comprehend that extraordinary alterative which is produced by the various and complicated agencies of water, brought systematically, unintermittingly, and for a considerable period, to bear, not only upon the complaint, but the constitution.

The rise from a sleep sound as childhood's—the impatient rush into the open air, while the sun was fresh, and the birds first sang—the sense of an unwonted strength in every limb and nerve, which made so light of the steep ascent to the holy spring—the delicious sparkle of that morning draught—the green terrace on the brow of the mountain, with the rich landscape wide and far below—the breeze that once would have been so keen and biting, now but exhilarating the blood, and lifting the spirits into religious joy; and this keen sentiment of present pleasure rounded by a hope sanctioned by all I felt in myself, and nearly all that I witnessed in others—that that very present was but the step—the threshold—into an unknown and delightful region of health and vigour;—a disease and a care dropping from the frame and the heart at every stride.

But here I must pause to own, that if on the one hand the danger and discomforts of the cure are greatly exaggerated (exaggerated is too weak a word)—so, on the other hand, as far as my own experience, which is perhaps not inconsiderable, extends, the enthusiastic advocates of the system have greatly misrepresented the duration of the curative process. I have read and heard of chronic diseases of long standing cured permanently in a very few weeks. I candidly confess that I have seen none such. I have, it is true, witnessed many chronic diseases perfectly cured—diseases which had been pronounced incurable by the first physicians,—but the cure has been long and fluctuating.

Persons so afflicted who try this system must arm themselves with patience. The first effects of the process are indeed usually bracing, and inspire such feelings

of general well-being, that some think they have only to return home, and carry out the cure partially, to recover. A great mistake!—the alterative effects begin long after the bracing—a disturbance in the constitution takes place, prolonged more or less, and not till that ceases does the cure really begin.

Not that the peculiar “crisis,” sought for so vehemently by the German water-doctors, and usually under their hands manifested by boils and eruptions, is at all a necessary part of the cure—it is, indeed, as far as I have seen, of rare occurrence—but a critical action, not single, not confined to one period, or one series of phenomena, is at work, often undetected by the patient himself, during a considerable (and that the later) portion of the cure in most patients where the malady has been grave, and where the recovery becomes permanent. During this time, the patient should be under the eye of his water-doctor.

To conclude my own case : I stayed some nine or ten weeks at Malvern, and business, from which I could not escape, obliging me then to be in the neighbourhood of town, I continued the system seven weeks longer under Doctor Weiss, at Petersham ; during this latter period, the agreeable phenomena which had characterized the former, the cheerfulness, the *bien être*, the consciousness of returning health vanished ; and were succeeded by great irritation of the nerves, extreme fretfulness, and the usual characteristics of the constitutional disturbance to which I have referred. I had every reason, however, to be satisfied with the care and skill of Doctor Weiss, who fully deserves the reputation he has acquired, and the attachment entertained towards him by his patients ; nor

did my judgment ever despond or doubt of the ultimate benefits of the process.

I emerged at last from these operations in no very portly condition. I was blanched and emaciated — washed out like a thrifty housewife's gown—but neither the bleaching nor the loss of weight had in the least impaired my strength; on the contrary, all the muscles had grown as hard as iron, and I was become capable of great exercise without fatigue; my cure was not effected, but I was compelled to go into Germany.

On my return homewards I was seized with a severe cold, which rapidly passed into high fever. Fortunately I was within reach of Doctor Schmidt's magnificent hydropathic establishment at Boppard; thither I caused myself to be conveyed; and now I had occasion to experience the wonderful effect of the water-cure in acute cases; slow in chronic disease, its beneficial operation in acute is immediate. In twenty-four hours, all fever had subsided, and on the third day I resumed my journey, relieved from every symptom that had before prognosticated a tedious and perhaps alarming illness.

And now came gradually, yet perceptibly, the good effects of the system I had undergone; flesh and weight returned; the sense of health became conscious and steady; I had every reason to bless the hour when I first sought the springs of Malvern. And here, I must observe, that it often happens that the patient makes but slight apparent improvement, when under the cure, compared with that which occurs subsequently. A water-doctor of repute at Brussels, indeed, said frankly to a grumbling patient, "I do not expect you to be well

while here—it is only on leaving me that you will know if I have cured you.”

It is as the frame recovers from the agitation it undergoes, that it gathers round it powers utterly unknown to it before—as the plant watered by the rains of one season betrays in the next the effect of the grateful dews.

I had always suffered so severely in winter, that the severity of our last one gave me apprehensions, and I resolved to seek shelter from my fears at my beloved Malvern. I here passed the most inclement period of the winter, not only perfectly free from the colds, rheums, and catarrhs, which had hitherto visited me with the snows, but in the enjoyment of excellent health ; and I am persuaded that for those who are delicate, and who suffer much during the winter, there is no place where the cold is so little felt as at a water-cure establishment.

I am persuaded also, and in this I am borne out by the experience of most water-doctors, that the cure is most rapid and effectual during the cold season—from autumn through the winter. I am thoroughly convinced that consumption in its earlier stages can be more easily cured, and the predisposition more permanently eradicated by a winter spent at Malvern, under the care of Doctor Wilson, than by the timorous flight to Pisa or Madeira. It is by hardening rather than defending the tissues that we best secure them from disease.

And now, to sum up, and to dismiss my egotistical revelations;—I desire in no way to overcolour my own case; I do not say that when I first went to the water-cure I was afflicted with any disease immediately menacing to life—I say only that I was in that prolonged and

chronic state of ill health, which made life at the best extremely precarious—I do not say that I had any malady which the faculty could pronounce incurable—I say only that the most eminent men of the faculty had failed to cure me. I do not even now affect to boast of a perfect and complete deliverance from all my ailments—I cannot declare that a constitution naturally delicate has been rendered Herculean, or that the wear and tear of a whole manhood have been thoroughly repaired.

What might have been the case had I not taken the cure at intervals, had I remained at it steadily for six or eight months without interruption, I cannot do more than conjecture, but so strong is my belief that the result would have been completely successful, that I promise myself, whenever I can spare the leisure, a long renewal of the system.

These admissions made, what have I gained meanwhile to justify my eulogies and my gratitude?—an immense accumulation of the *capital of health*. Formerly, it was my favourite and querulous question to those who saw much of me, “Did you ever know me twelve hours without pain or illness?” Now, instead of these being my constant companions, they are but my occasional visitors. I compare my old state and my present to the poverty of a man who has a shilling in his pocket, and whose poverty is therefore a struggle for life, with the occasional distresses of a man of 5000*l.* a year, who sees but an appendage endangered, or a luxury abridged.

All the good that I have gained, is wholly unlike what I have ever derived either from medicine or the German mineral baths: in the first place, it does not relieve a

single malady alone, it pervades the whole frame; in the second place, unless the habits are intemperate, it does not wear off as we return to our ordinary pursuits, so that those who make fair experiment of the system towards, or even after, the season of middle age, may, without exaggeration, find in the latter period of life (so far as freedom from suffering, and the calm enjoyment of physical being are concerned) a second—a younger youth! And it is this profound conviction which has induced me to volunteer these details, in the hope (I trust a pure and kindly one) to induce those, who more or less have suffered as I have done, to fly to the same rich and bountiful resources.

We ransack the ends of the earth for drugs and minerals—we extract our potions from the deadliest poisons—but around us, and about us, Nature, the great mother proffers the Hygeian fount, unsealed and accessible to all. Wherever the stream glides pure, wherever the spring sparkles fresh, there, for the vast proportion of the maladies which Art produces, Nature yields the benignant healing.

It remains for me to say, merely as an observer, and solely with such authority as an observer altogether disinterested, but, of course, without the least pretence to professional science, may fairly claim, what class of diseases I have seen least, and what most, tractable to the operations of the water-cure, and how far enthusiasts appear to me to have over-estimated, how far sceptics have undervalued, the effects of water as a medicament.

There are those (most of the water-doctors especially) who contend that all medicine by drugs is unnecessary—

that water internally and outwardly applied suffices, under skilful management, for all complaints—that the time will come when the drug-doctor will cease to receive a fee, when the apothecary will close his shop, and the water-cure be adopted in every hospital and by every family.

Dreams and absurdities! Even granting that the water-cure were capable of all the wonders ascribed to it, its process is so slow in most chronic cases—it usually requires such complete abstraction from care and business—it takes the active man so thoroughly out of his course of life, that a vast proportion of those engaged in worldly pursuits cannot hope to find the requisite leisure. There are also a large number of complaints (perhaps the majority) which yield so easily to a sparing use of drugs, under a moderately competent practitioner, that the convenient plan of sending to the next chemist for your pill or potion can never be superseded, nor can I think it desirable that it should be. Moreover, as far as I have seen, there are complaints curable by medicine which the water-cure utterly fails to reach.

The disorders wherein hydropathy appears to me to be the least effectual are, first, neuralgic pains, especially the monster pain of the *Tic Doloieux*. Not one instance of a cure in the latter by hydropathy has come under my own observation, and I have only heard of one authentic case of recovery from it by that process. Secondly, paralysis of a grave character in persons of an advanced age. Thirdly, in tubercular consumption. As may be expected in this stage of that melancholy disease, the water-cure utterly fails to restore, but I have known it even here prolong life, beyond all reasonable calculation, and astonishingly relieve the more oppressive symptoms.

In all cases where the nervous exhaustion is great and of long standing, and is accompanied with obstinate hypochondria; hydropathy, if successful at all, is very slow in its benefits, and the patience of the sufferer is too often worn out before the favourable turn takes place. I have also noticed that obstinate and deep-rooted maladies in persons otherwise of very athletic frames, seem to yield much more tardily to the water-cure than similar complaints in more delicate constitutions; so that you will often see, of two persons afflicted with the same genera of complaints, the feeble and fragile one recover before the stout man with Atlantic shoulders evinces one symptom of amelioration. I must add, too, generally, that where the complaint is not functional, but clearly organic, I should deceive the patient if I could bid him hope from water more than what drugs may effect—viz., palliatives and relief. But medical science is not always unerring in its decisions on organic complaints, and many that have been pronounced to be such, yield to the searching and all-penetrative influences of water.

Those cases, on the other hand, in which the water-cure seems an absolute panacea, and in which the patient may commence with the most sanguine hopes, are, First, rheumatism, however prolonged, however complicated. In this the cure is usually rapid—nearly always permanent. Secondly, gout.

Here its efficacy is little less startling to appearance than in the former case; it seems to take up the disease by the roots; it extracts the peculiar acid, which often appears in discolorations upon the sheets used in the application, or is ejected in other modes. But here, judging always from cases subjected to my personal

knowledge, I have not seen instances to justify the assertion of some water-doctors, that returns of the disease do not occur. The predisposition—the tendency has appeared to me to remain. The patient is liable to relapses—but I have invariably found them *far* less frequent, less lengthened, and readily susceptible of simple and speedy cure, especially if the habits remain temperate.

Thirdly, that wide and grisly family of affliction classed under the common name of *dyspepsia*. All derangements of the digestive organs, imperfect powers of nutrition—the *malaise* of an injured stomach, appear precisely the complaints on which the system takes firmest hold, and in which it effects those cures that convert existence from a burden into a blessing.

Hence it follows that many nameless and countless complaints proceeding from derangement of the stomach, cease as that great machine is restored to order. I have seen disorders of the heart which have been pronounced organic by no inferior authorities of the profession, disappear in an incredibly short time—cases of incipient consumption, in which the seat is in the nutritious powers; hæmorrhages, and various congestions, shortness of breath, habitual fainting-fits, many of what are called improperly nervous complaints, but which, in reality, are radiations from the main ganglionic spring; the disorders produced by the abuse of powerful medicines, *especially mercury* and iodine, the loss of appetite, the dulled sense, and the shaking hand of intemperance, skin complaints, and the dire scourge of scrofula—all these seem to obtain from hydropathy relief—nay, absolute and unqualified cure, beyond not only the

means of the most skilful drug-doctor, but the hopes of the most sanguine patient.*

The cure may be divided into two branches—the process for acute complaints—that for chronic; I have just referred to the last. And great as are there its benefits, they seem commonplace beside the effect the system produces in acute complaints. Fever, including the scarlet and the typhus, influenza, measles, small-pox, the sudden and rapid disorders of children, are cured with a simplicity and precision which must, I am persuaded, sooner or later, render the resources of the hydropathist the ordinary treatment for such acute complaints in the hospitals.

The principal remedy here employed by the water-doctor is, the wet-sheet packing, which excites such terror amongst the uninitiated, and which, of all the curatives adopted by hydropathy, is unquestionably the safest—the one that can be applied without danger to the greatest variety of cases, and which I do not hesitate to aver can rarely, if ever, be misapplied in any cases where the pulse is hard and high, and the skin dry and burning.

I have found in conversation so much misapprehension of this very easy and very luxurious remedy, that I may be pardoned for re-explaining what has been explained so

* Amongst other complaints, I may add, dropsy, which, in its simple state, and not as the crowning symptom of a worn-out constitution, I have known most successfully treated; cases of slight paralysis; and I have witnessed two instances of partial blindness, in which the sight was restored. I have never *seen* deafness cured by hydropathy, though I believe that one of the best German treatises on the Water-Cure, at Graafenberg, was written by a Prussian officer, whom Priessnitz relieved from that not least cheerless of human infirmities.

often. It is not, as people persist in supposing, that patients are put into wet sheets and there left to shiver. The sheets, after being saturated, are well wrung out—the patient quickly wrapped in them—several blankets tightly bandaged round, and a feather-bed placed at top; thus, especially where there is the least fever, the first momentary chill is promptly succeeded by a gradual and vivifying warmth, perfectly free from the irritation of *dry* heat—a delicious sense of ease is usually followed by a sleep more agreeable than anodynes ever produced. It seems a positive cruelty to be relieved from this magic girdle in which pain is lulled, and fever cooled, and watchfulness lapped in slumber.

The bath which succeeds, refreshes and braces the skin, which the operation relaxed and softened. They only who have tried this, after fatigue or in fever, can form the least notion of its pleasurable sensations, or of its extraordinary efficacy; nor is there anything startling or novel in its theory.

In hospitals, now, water-dressings are found the best poultice to an inflamed member; this expansion of the wet dressing is a poultice to the whole inflamed surface of the body. It does not differ greatly, except in its cleanliness and simplicity, from the old remedy of the ancients—the wrapping the body in the skins of animals newly slain, or placing it on dunghills, or immersing it, as now in Germany, in the soft slough of mud-baths.*

* A very eminent London physician, opposed generally to the water-cure, told me that he had effected a perfect cure in a case of inveterate leprosy, by swathing the patient in wet lint covered with oil-skin. This is the wet-sheet packing, but there are patients who would take kindly to wet lint, and shudder at the idea of a wet sheet!

Its theory is that of warmth and moisture, those friendliest agents to inflammatory disorders.

In fact, I think it the duty of every man, on whom the lives of others depend, to make himself acquainted with at least this part of the water-cure:—the wet sheet is the true life-preserver. In the large majority of sudden inflammatory complaints, the doctor at a distance, prompt measures indispensable, it will at the least arrest the disease, check the fever, till, if you prefer the drugs, the drugs can come—the remedy is at hand, wherever you can find a bed and a jug of water; and whatever else you may apprehend after a short visit to a hydropathic establishment, your fear of that bugbear—the wet sheet—is the first you banish.

The only cases, I believe, where it can be positively mischievous is where the pulse scarcely beats—where the vital sense is extremely low—where the inanition of the frame forbids the necessary reaction;—in cholera, and certain disorders of the chest and bronchia; otherwise at all ages, from the infant to the octogenarian, it is equally applicable, and in most acute cases, equally innocent.

Hydrophy being thus rapidly beneficial in acute disorders, it follows naturally that it will be quick as a cure in chronic complaints in proportion as acute symptoms are mixed with them, and slowest where such complaints are dull and lethargic—it will be slowest also where the nervous exhaustion is the greatest. With children, its effects can scarcely be exaggerated; in them, the nervous system, not weakened by toil, grief, anxiety, and intemperance, lends itself to the gracious element as a young plant to the rains.

When I see now some tender mother coddling, and

physicking, and preserving from every breath of air, and swaddling in flannels, her pallid little ones, I long to pounce upon the callow brood, and bear them to the hills of Malvern, and the diamond fountain of St. Anne's—with what rosy faces and robust limbs I promise they shall return—alas! I promise and preach in vain—the family apothecary is against me, and the progeny are doomed to rhubarb and the rickets.

The water-cure as yet has had this evident injustice,—the patients resorting to it have mostly been desperate cases. So strong a notion prevails that it is a desperate remedy, that they only who have found all else fail have dragged themselves to the Bethesda Pools. That all thus not only abandoned by hope and the College, but weakened and poisoned by the violent medicines absorbed into their system for a score or so of years,—that all should not recover is not surprising!

The wonder is that the number of recoveries should be so great;—that every now and then we should be surprised by the man whose untimely grave we predicted when we last saw him, meeting us in the streets ruddy and stalwart, fresh from the springs of Graafenberg, Boppard, Petersham, or Malvern.

The remedy is *not* desperate; it is simpler, I do not say than any *dose*, but than any *course* of medicine—it is infinitely more agreeable—it admits no remedies for the complaint which are inimical to the constitution. It bequeathes none of the maladies consequent on blue pill and mercury—on purgatives and drastics—on iodine and aconite—on leeches and the lancet. If it cures your complaint, it will assuredly strengthen your whole frame; if it

fails to cure your complaint, it can scarcely fail to improve your general system.

As it acts, or ought, scientifically treated, to act, first on the system, lastly on the complaint, placing nature herself in the way to throw off the disease, so it constantly happens that the patients at a hydropathic establishment will tell you that the disorder for which they came is not removed, but that in all other respects their health is better than they ever remember it to have been.

Thus, I would not only recommend it to those who are sufferers from some grave disease, but to those who require merely the fillip, the alterative, or the bracing which they now often seek in vain in country air or a watering-place. For such, three weeks at Malvern will do more than three months at Brighton or Boulogne; for at the water-cure the whole life is one remedy; the hours, the habits, the discipline—not incompatible with gaiety and cheerfulness (the spirits of hydropathists are astounding, and in high spirits all things are amusement) tend perforce to train the body to the highest state of health of which it is capable.

Compare this life, O merchant, O trader, O man of business, escaping to the sea-shore, with that which you there lead—with your shrimps and your shell-fish, and your wine and your brown stout—with all which counteracts in the evening, the good of your morning dip and your noonday stroll.

What, I own, I should envy most, are the feelings of the robust, healthy man, only a little knocked down by his city cares or his town pleasures, after his second week at Dr. Wilson's establishment—yea, how I should envy

the exquisite pleasure which he would derive from that robustness made clear and sensible to him;—the pure taste, the iron muscles, the exuberant spirits, the overflowing sense of life.

If even to the weak and languid the water-cure gives hours of physical happiness which the pleasures of the grosser senses can never bestow, what would it give to the strong man, from whose eye it has but to lift the light film—in whose mechanism, attuned to joy, it but brushes away the grain of dust, or oils the solid wheel!

I must bring my letter to a close. I meant to address it through you, Mr. Editor, chiefly to our brethren—the over-jaded sons of toil and letters—behind whom I see the warning shades of departed martyrs. But it is applicable to all who ail—to all who would not only cure a complaint, but strengthen a system and prolong a life.

To such, who will so far attach value to my authority, that they will acknowledge, at least, I am no interested witness—for I have no institution to establish—no profession to build up—I have no eye to fees, my calling is but that of an observer—as an observer only do I speak, it may be with enthusiasm—but enthusiasm built on experience and prompted by sympathy;—to such, then, as may listen to me, I give this recommendation: pause if you please—inquire if you will—but do not consult your doctor. I have no doubt he is a most honest, excellent man—but you cannot expect a doctor of drugs to say other than that doctors of water are but quacks.

Do not consult your doctor whether you shall try hydro-pathy, but find out some intelligent persons in whose shrewdness you can confide—who have been patients

themselves at a hydropathic establishment. Better still, go for a few days—the cost is not much—into some such institution yourself, look round, talk to the patients, examine with your own eyes, hear with your own ears, before you adventure the experiment. Become a witness before you are a patient; if the evidence does not satisfy you, turn and flee.

But if you venture, venture with a good heart and a stout faith. Hope, but not with presumption. Do not fancy that the disorder which has afflicted you for ten years ought to be cured in ten days. *Beware, above all, lest, alarmed by some phenomena which the searching element produces, you have recourse immediately to drugs to disperse them.* The water-boils, for instance, which are sometimes, as I have before said, but by no means frequently, a critical symptom of the cure, are, in all cases that I have seen, cured easily by water, but may become extremely dangerous in the hands of your apothecary.*

* I have no prejudice, as I have before implied, against the use of drugs, though, despite their more merciful and sparing administration during the last twenty years, I venture, with such diffidence as becomes one practised upon, not practising, to hint an opinion, that they are still applied more frequently than is warranted by their success on the complaint, or their effect on the constitution. But I am quite sure that a patient can rarely, with impunity, be at once under a water-doctor and a drug-doctor; and that the passage from the first to the last requires the greatest nicety and caution. A physician, however skilful, who not only has not witnessed, but is inclined to deride that commotion which is produced in the system, especially on the nerves, by vigorous hydropathic treatment, can scarcely be aware of its nature and extent, nor how frequently medicines, quite innocuous with an ordinary patient, may become dangerous, misapplied to one fresh from a long course of hydropathy. Dr. Weeding, of Ryde, it is true, sometimes unites drugs with the water-cure. As I never witnessed his treatment, so I can say

Most of the few solitary instances that have terminated fatally, to the prejudice of the water-cure, have been those in which the patient has gone from water to drugs. It is the axiom of the system, that water only cures what water produces. Do not leave a hydropathic establishment in the time of any "crisis," however much you may be panic-stricken. Hold the doctor responsible for getting you out of what he gets you into; and if your doctor be discreetly chosen, take my word he will do it.

Do not *begin* to carry on the system at home, and under any eye but that of an experienced hydropathist. After you know the system, and the doctor knows you, the curative process may *probably* be continued at your own house with ease—but the commencement must be watched, and if a critical action ensues when you are at home, return to the only care that can conduct it safely to a happy issue.

When at the institution, do not let the example of other patients tempt you to overdo—to drink more water, or take more baths than are prescribed to you. Above all, never let the eulogies which many will pass upon the

nothing as to its effects. But granting them to be such as to warrant his departure from hydropathic theory and practice, it is one question whether a water-doctor, thoroughly acquainted with his own system, and minutely studying its effects on a particular patient, may or not, with advantage, occasionally administer drugs, and another question, whether a physician, wholly unacquainted with the water-cure, can be reasonably expected to deal, from his ordinary pathological experience, however great, with the peculiar symptoms produced by a system of which he knows nothing, or with a constitution rendered by the same system acutely sensitive to drugs, and in which a critical excitement, wholly out of his range of practice, is probably at work.

douche (the popular bath), tempt you to take it on the sly, unknown to your adviser. The *douche* is dangerous when the body is unprepared—when the heart is affected—when apoplexy may be feared. After you leave the establishment, be slow and gradual in your return to all habits that require much intellectual labour, or subject you to much nervous harassment; be slow, also, in your return to habits that necessitate late hours. If you drink wine or fermented liquors at all, be sparing at first in your recurrence to them. Well for you if you adhere throughout life to water as your ordinary beverage, and make wine but your occasional luxury. At all events, let the constitution slowly *settle* back—do not *hurry* it back—to artifice from Nature.

For your choice of an establishment you have a wide range. Institutions in England are now plentiful, and planted in some of the loveliest spots of our island. But as I only speak from personal knowledge, I can but here depose to such as I have visited. I hear, indeed, a high character of Doctor Johnson, of Stansted-Berry, and his books show great ability. Much is said in praise of Doctor Freeman, of Cheltenham, though his system, in some measure, is at variance with the received notions of hydropathists. But of these and many others, perhaps no less worthy of confidence—such as the magnificent establishment at Ben Rhydding, in Yorkshire; that at Grasmere, under Doctor Stum; and that at Ryde, in which Doctor Weeding seeks to unite hydropathy with drugs, &c. &c.—I have no experience of my own. I have sojourned with advantage at Doctor Weiss's, at Petersham; and for those whose business and avocations oblige them to

be near London, his very agreeable house proffers many advantages, besides his own long practice and great skill.

To those who wish to try the system abroad, and shrink from the long journey to Graafenberg, Dr. Schmidt, at Boppart, proffers a princely house, comprising every English comfort, and I can bear ready witness to his skill; but it is natural that the place which has for me the most grateful recollections, should be that where I received the earliest and the greatest benefit—viz., Doctor Wilson's, at Malvern; there even the distance from the capital has its advantages.

The cure imperatively demands, at least in a large proportion of cases, abstraction from all the habitual cares of life, and in some the very neighbourhood of London suffices to produce restlessness and anxiety. For certain complaints, especially those of children, and such as are attended with debility, the air of Malvern is in itself Hygeian. The water is immemorially celebrated for its purity—the landscape is a perpetual pleasure to the eye—the mountains furnish the exercise most suited to the cure—“*Man muss Gebirge haben*,” “one must have mountains,” is the saying of Priessnitz.

All these are powerful auxiliaries, and yet all these are subordinate to the diligent, patient care—the minute, unwearied attention—the anxious, unaffected interest, which Doctor Wilson manifests to every patient, from the humblest to the highest, who may be submitted to his care. The vast majority of *difficult cures* which I have witnessed, have emanated from his skill. To his long practical experience, and thorough knowledge of his profession, he

adds a tact* in diseases which seems intuitive; he has that pure pleasure in his profession that the profits of it seem to be almost lost sight of, and having an independence of his own, his enthusiasm for the system he pursues is at least not based upon any mercenary speculation. I have seen him devote the same time and care to those whom his liberal heart has led him to treat gratuitously as to the wealthiest of his patients, and I mention this less to praise him for generosity than to show that he has that earnest faith in his own system, which begets an earnest faith in those to whom he administers; in all new experiments, it is a great thing to have well-founded confidence, not only in the skill, but the sincerity, of your adviser.—His treatment is more discriminating and less violent than that in fashion on the Continent. If he errs, it is on the side of caution, and his theory leads him so much towards the restoration of the whole system, that the relief of the particular malady will sometimes seem tedious in order to prove complete. Hence he inspires in those who have had a prolonged experience of his treatment a great sense of safety and security.

And since there is no small responsibility in recommending any practitioner of a novel school, so it is a comfort to

* I use the word "tact" advisedly; for I think the medical profession will bear me out in the observation, that a certain quality, which I can describe by no other word, is as valuable, as it is rare in practice, and often makes the precise and scarce describable difference between one physician and another. To this Doctor Wilson joins a remarkable acuteness in his predictions as to the nature and termination of complaints, which he, no doubt, owes in much to his knowledge of the human frame, and his careful education as a practitioner,—but towards which, I suppose, as in all other gifts, a natural faculty guides the acquired experience.

know that whoever resorts to Doctor Wilson will at least be in hands not only practised and skilful, but wary and safe. And I cannot help adding, that though Mrs. Wilson does not interfere with the patients, it must be gratifying to such ladies as resort to Malvern to find in her the birth and manners of a perfect gentlewoman, and the noiseless solicitude of a heart genuinely kind and good!

Here then, O brothers, O afflicted ones, I bid you farewell. I wish you one of the most blessed friendships man ever made—the familiar intimacy with Water. Not Undine in her virgin existence more sportive and bewitching, not Undine in her wedded state more tender and faithful than the Element of which she is the type. In health may you find it the joyous playmate, in sickness the genial restorer and soft assuager. Round the healing spring still literally dwell the jocund nymphs in whom the Greek poetry personified Mirth and Ease. No drink, whether compounded of the gums and rosin of the old Falernian, or the alcohol and acid of modern wine, gives the animal spirits which rejoice the water-drinker.

Let him who has to go through severe bodily fatigue try first whatever—wine, spirits, porter, beer—he may conceive most generous and supporting; let him then go through the same toil with no draughts but from the crystal lymph, and if he does not acknowledge that there is no beverage which man concocts so strengthening and animating as that which God pours forth to all the children of nature, I throw up my brief.

Finally, as health depends upon healthful habits, let those who desire easily and luxuriously to glide into the courses most agreeable to the human frame, to enjoy the morning

breeze, to grow epicures in the simple regimen, to become cased in armour against the vicissitudes of our changeful skies—to feel, and to shake off, light sleep as a blessed dew, let them, while the organs are yet sound, and the nerves yet unshattered, devote an autumn to the water-cure.

And you, O parents ! who, too indolent, too much slaves to custom, to endure change for yourselves, to renounce for awhile your artificial natures, but who still covet for your children hardy constitutions, pure tastes, and abstemious habits—who wish to see them grow up with a manly disdain of luxury—with a vigorous indifference to climate—with a full sense of the value of health, not alone for itself, but for the powers it elicits, and the virtues with which it is intimately connected—the serene, unfretful temper—the pleasure in innocent delights—the well-being that, content with self, expands in benevolence to others—you I adjure not to scorn the facile process of which I solicit the experiment. Dip your young heroes in the spring, and hold them not back by the heel. May my exhortations find believing listeners, and may some, now unknown to me, write me word from the green hills of Malvern, or the groves of Petersham, “ We have hearkened to you—not in vain.”

Adieu, Mr. Editor, the ghost returns to silence.

E. BULWER LYTTON.

